

## Guidance for Healthcare Facilities and Systems for COVID-19

Updated: 3/18/2020

COVID-19 is circulating in Iowa communities and many more Iowans are likely to become ill in the coming weeks. Healthcare facilities and systems are encouraged to:

- Implement your health system and health facility's emergency response plan immediately.
- Communicate to hospitals and clinics that influenza swabs and viral transport media are appropriate for COVID-19 testing. Healthcare systems should order supplies directly from suppliers. A limited number of test kits can be ordered through the State Hygienic Laboratory at <http://www.shl.uiowa.edu/dcd/covid19.xml>.
- Communicate to all hospitals and clinics that contact and droplet precautions with eye protection should be used when evaluating patients with suspected COVID-19. Airborne precautions (fit-tested N95 or equivalent) should be used for aerosol-generating procedures. Educate all healthcare staff on proper personal protective equipment donning and doffing techniques: <https://medcom.uiowa.edu/theloop/news/personal-protective-equipment-our-process-if-covid-19-is-suspected>.
- Limit visitors to reduce facility-based transmission.
- Actively monitor healthcare staff for respiratory illness and absenteeism.
  - Actively monitor PPE supplies.
  - Utilize the CDC Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of N95 Respirators found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/respirators-strategy/index.html>.
  - Use the following process to locate PPE supplies
    - Reassign/re-allocate resources from one part of the facility to another to meet needs
    - Reaffirm available supplies with existing vendors
    - Contact other county partners for resource availability
    - Contact healthcare system affiliates for available resources
    - Contact your Health Care Coalition coordinator to assist in locating any available resources from coalition partners
  - Once the resources above have been exhausted, contact your county emergency management coordinator to submit the PPE request in WebEOC.
  - The request in WebEOC must include the following detailed information:
    - Type and quantity of specific resources requested;
    - Current quantity on hand and within the facility or agency;
    - Timeframe in which request is being made/how soon resources are needed;
    - List a local point of contact for the resource request;

- List the address where resources will be delivered;
- Cross train healthcare staff for working in other units.
  - Screen patients for fever and respiratory symptoms. Consider ways to triage patients before they enter your facility.
  - Consider cohorting of patients, separate patients with respiratory illness from all other patients.
  - Consider cohorting of staff, assign specific staff to patients with respiratory illness only.
  - If ill patient volume is overwhelming, implement ways to postpone elective procedures that are not for an urgent or life-threatening condition.
  - The healthcare systems are encouraged to pursue telemedicine and telehealth opportunities for physicians to perform clinical assessments.
  - Assure that that healthcare system providers call IDPH immediately to report positive COVID-19 results, by calling 800-362-2736 Healthcare facilities should consider ways to have employees who are older or have underlying conditions work with persons that do not have respiratory illness.
  - Asymptomatic healthcare workers are considered essential services personnel; therefore, healthcare workers that have been exposed to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 can continue to work with a facemask.
  - Not all people need testing. If a person is mildly ill with respiratory symptoms and can recover at home without testing, that is a reasonable approach. Avoid over burdening the health system by unnecessarily testing the mildly ill for whom care decisions will not change according to a test result.
  - Approximately 80% of lowans infected with COVID-19 will experience only a mild to moderate illness. Most mildly ill lowans will not need to seek care and are advised to call ahead to providers to be assessed for clinical needs. Sick lowans must stay home and isolate themselves from others in their house. The following advice is for anyone (including health care workers) who has fever and respiratory symptoms (including confirmed COVID-19 cases). If you are sick, stay home until:
    - You have had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use of medicine that reduces fevers)  
**AND**
    - other symptoms have improved (for example, when your cough or shortness of breath have improved)  
**AND**
    - at least 7 days have passed since your symptoms first appeared.